



Symbolic Meanings of Tai Chi Posture Names

Beginning

Derived from hexagram 35. At the start of the day the sun moves slowly higher and higher over the earth. This posture represents progress and the development of virtue.

Grasp Sparrows Tail

Derived from hexagram 1. The left hand is held at chin level as though grasping the head of the bird, the right hand placed to the side of the hip as though smoothing the bird's tail. The bird is a symbol of consciousness, air, spirit and breath.

Press Forward

The hands, when pressed forward, represent the new moon waxing to the full. But in the flow of nature, when the moon is full it begins to wane. Therefore, you separate the hands and rest backward (withdraw), indicating the waning moon.

Push Forward

With the hands parallel to each other in front of the body, it is a symbol of strength outside and emptiness within. The act of pushing forward recalls the arc of the sun as it goes forward across the heavens.

Single Whip

Derived from hexagram 49. Heaven and earth bring about revolution, and the cycle of the four seasons is complete. The body turns, with the arms still parallel, in a gentle flowing motion as a light wind. The fingers are pinched together to form the bird's beak.

Play Guitar

Derived from hexagram 17. It is a joyous activity to strum the ancient Chinese lute – an oval-shaped wooden stringed instrument called a pipa. The posture requires a firm stance as the foot is aroused, lightly touching the floor and ready to kick. Strumming the lute means to be without worldly desire and ambition, i.e., to enjoy nature. It signifies the use of the legs, arms, hands and fingers.

Retreat Shoulder

Derived from hexagram 34. The posture suggests a goat, or similar animal, becoming aroused like the thunder and with much strength moving forward to butt a fence.